Napoleon III.
IN ITALY.
etc.

Mrs. BROWNING

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NAPOLEON III

IN ITALY.

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

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PREFACE.

THESE poems were written under the pressure of the events they indicate, after a residence in Italy of so many years, that the present triumph of great principles is heightened to the writer's feelings by the disastrous issue of the last movement, witnessed from "Casa Guidi windows" in 1849. Yet, if the verses should appear to English readers too pungently rendered to admit of a patriotic respect to the English sense of things, I will not excuse myself on such grounds, nor on the ground of my attachment to the Italian people, and my admiration of their heroic constancy and union. What I have written has simply been written because I love truth and justice *quand même*, "more than Plato" and Plato's country, more than Dante and Dante's country, more even than Shakspeare and Shakspeare's country.

And if patriotism means the flattery of one's nation in every case, then the patriot, take it as you please, is merely a courtier, which I am not, though I have written "Napoleon III. in Italy." It is time to limit the significance of certain terms, or to enlarge the significance of certain things. Nationality is excellent in its place; and the instinct of self-love is the *root* of a man, which will develope into sacrificial virtues. But all the virtues are means and uses; and, if we hinder their tendency to growth and expansion, we both destroy them as virtues, and degrade them to that rankest species of corruption reserved for the most noble organisations. For instance, non-intervention in the affairs of neighbouring states is a high political virtue; but non-intervention does not mean, passing by on the other side when your neighbour falls among thieves,—or Phariseeism would recover it from Christianity. Freedom itself is virtue, as well as privilege; but freedom of the seas does not mean piracy, nor freedom of the land, brigandage; nor freedom of the senate, freedom to cudgel a dissident member, nor freedom of the press, freedom

to calumniate and lie. So, if patriotism be a virtue indeed, it cannot mean an exclusive devotion to one's country's interest,—for that is only another form of devotion to personal interests, of family interests, or provincial interests, all of which, if not driven past themselves, are vulgar and immoral objects. Let us put away the little Pedlingtonism unworthy of a great nation, and too prevalent among us. If the man who does not look beyond this natural life is of a somewhat narrow order, what must be the man who does not look beyond his own frontier or his own sea?

I confess that I dream of the day when an English statesman shall arise with a heart too large for England, having courage, in the face of his countrymen, to assert of some suggestive policy,—"This is good for your trade; this is necessary for your domination; but it will vex a people hard by; it will hurt a people farther off; it will profit nothing to the general humanity; therefore, away with it!—it is not for you or for me." When a British minister dares to speak so, and when a

British public applauds him speaking, then shall the nation be so glorious, that her praise, instead of exploding from within, from loud civic mouths, shall come to her from without, as all worthy praise must, from the alliances she has fostered, and from the populations she has saved.

And poets, who write of the events of that time, shall not need to justify themselves in prefaces, for ever so little jarring of the national sentiment imputable to their rhymes.

Rome, *February*, 1860.

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POEMS.

NAPOLEON III. IN ITALY.

I.

Emperor, Emperor!
From the centre to the shore,
From the Seine back to the Rhine,
Stood eight millions up and swore
By their manhood's right divine
So to elect and legislate,
This man should renew the line
Broken in a strain of fate
And leagued kings at Waterloo,
When the people's hands let go.
Emperor
Evermore.

II.

With a universal shout
They took the old regalia out
From an open grave that day;
From a grave that would not close,
Where the first Napoleon lay
  Expectant, in repose,
As still as Merlin, with his conquering face
Turned up in its unquenchable appeal
To men and heroes of the advancing race,
  Prepare to set the seal
Of what has been on what shall be.
    Emperor
    Evermore.

III.

  The thinkers stood aside
  To let the nation act.
Some hated the new-constituted fact
Of empire, as pride treading on their pride.
Some quailed, lest what was poisonous in the past
Should graft itself in that Druidic bough
    On this green now.
  Some cursed, because at last

The open heavens to which they had look'd in vain
For many a golden fall of marvellous rain
  Were closed in brass; and some
Wept on because a gone thing could not come;
And some were silent, doubting all things for
    That popular conviction,—evermore
    Emperor.

IV.

That day I did not hate
Nor doubt, nor quail, nor curse.
I, revereneing the people, did not bate
My reverence of their deed and oracle,
  Nor vainly prate
  Of better and of worse
Against the great conclusion of their will.
  And yet, O voice and verse,
Which God set in me to acclaim and sing
Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,
We gave no music to the patent thing,
Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb and swim
  About the name of him
Translated to the sphere of domination
  By democratic passion!

I was not used, at least,
Nor can be, now or then,
To stroke the ermine beast
On any kind of throne,
(Though builded by a nation for its own,)
And swell the surging choir for kings of men—
'Emperor
Evermore.'

V.

But now, Napoleon, now
That, leaving far behind the purple throng
Of vulgar monarchs, thou
Tread'st higher in thy deed
Than stair of throne can lead
To help in the hour of wrong
The broken hearts of nations to be strong,—
Now, lifted as thou art
To the level of pure song,
We stand to meet thee on these Alpine snows!
And while the palpitating peaks break out
Ecstatic from somnambular repose
With answers to the presence and the shout,

We, poets of the people, who take part
With elemental justice, natural right,
  Join in our echoes also, nor refrain.
We meet thee, O Napoleon, at this height
At last, and find thee great enough to praise.
Receive the poet's chrism, which smells beyond
  The priest's, and pass thy ways;—
An English poet warns thee to maintain
God's word, not England's:—let His truth be true
And all men liars! with His truth respond
To all men's lie. Exalt the sword and smite
On that long anvil of the Apennine
Where Austria forged the Italian chain in view
Of seven consenting nations, sparks of fine
  Admonitory light,
Till men's eyes wink before convictions new.
Flash in God's justice to the world's amaze,
Sublime Deliverer!—after many days
Found worthy of the deed thou art come to do—
    Emperor
    Evermore.

VI.

But Italy, my Italy,
Can it last, this gleam?

Can she live and be strong,
Or is it another dream
Like the rest we have dreamed so long?
And shall it, must it be,
That after the battle-cloud has broken
She will die off again
Like the rain,
Or like a poet's song
Sung of her, sad at the end
Because her name is Italy,—
Die and count no friend?
It is true,—may it be spoken,
That she who has lain so still,
With a wound in her breast,
And a flower in her hand,
And a grave-stone under her head,
While every nation at will
Beside her has dared to stand
And flout her with pity and scorn,
Saying, 'She is at rest,
She is fair, she is dead,
And, leaving room in her stead
To Us who are later born,
This is certainly best!'

Saying, 'Alas, she is fair,
Very fair, but dead,
And so we have room for the race.'
—Can it be true, be true,
That she lives anew?
That she rises up at the shout of her sons,
At the trumpet of France,
And lives anew?—is it true
That she has not moved in a trance,
As in Forty-eight?
When her eyes were troubled with blood
Till she knew not friend from foe,
Till her hand was caught in a strait
Of her cerement and baffled so
From doing the deed she would;
And her weak foot stumbled across
The grave of a king,
And down she dropt at heavy loss,
And we gloomily covered her face and said,
'We have dreamed the thing;
She is not alive, but dead.'

VII.

Now, shall we say
Our Italy lives indeed?
And if it were not for the beat and bray
Of drum and trump of martial men,
Should we feel the underground heave and strain,
Where heroes left their dust as a seed
Sure to emerge one day?
And if it were not for the rhythmic march
Of France and Piedmont's double hosts,
Should we hear the ghosts
Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,
Throb along the frescoed wall,
Whisper an oath by that divine
They left in picture, book and stone
That Italy is not dead at all?
Ay, if it were not for the tears in our eyes
These tears of a sudden passionate joy
Should we see her arise
From the place where the wicked are overthrown,
Italy, Italy? loosed at length
From the tyrant's thrall,
Pale and calm in her strength?
Pale as the silver cross of Savoy

When the hand that bears the flag is brave,
And not a breath is stirring, save
  What is blown
Over the war-trump's lip of brass,
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass!

VIII.

  Ay, it is so, even so.
  Ay, and it shall be so.
Each broken stone that long ago
She flung behind her as she went
In discouragement and bewilderment
Through the cairns of Time, and missed her way
  Between to-day and yesterday,
  Up springs a living man.
And each man stands with his face in the light
  Of his own drawn sword,
Ready to do what a hero can.
Wall to sap, or river to ford,
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,
Still ready to do, and sworn to be true,
  As a man and a patriot can.
Piedmontese, Neapolitan,

Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,
Each man's body having a soul,—
Count how many they stand,
All of them sons of the land,
Every live man there
Allied to a dead man below,
And the deadest with blood to spare
To quicken a living hand
In case it should ever be slow.
Count how many they come
To the beat of Piedmont's drum,
With faces keener and grayer
Than swords of the Austrian slayer,
All set against the foe.
'Emperor
Evermore.'

IX.

Out of the dust, where they ground them,
Out of the holes, where they dogged them,
Out of the hulks, where they wound them
In iron, tortured and flogged them;
Out of the streets, where they chased them,

Taxed them and then bayoneted them,—
Out of the homes, where they spied on them,
(Using their daughters and wives,)
Out of the church, where they fretted them,
Rotted their souls and debased them,
Trained them to answer with knives,
Then cursed them all at their prayers!—
Out of cold lands, not theirs,
Where they exiled them, starved them, lied on them;
Back they come like a wind, in vain
Cramped up in the hills, that roars its road
The stronger into the open plain;
Or like a fire that burns the hotter
And longer for the crust of cinder,
Serving better the ends of the potter;
Or like a restrainèd word of God,
Fulfilling itself by what seems to hinder.
'Emperor
Evermore.'

X.

Shout for France and Savoy!
Shout for the helper and doer.

Shout for the good sword's ring,
Shout for the thought still truer.
Shout for the spirits at large
Who passed for the dead this spring,
Whose living glory is sure.
Shout for France and Savoy!
Shout for the council and charge!
Shout for the head of Cavour;
And shout for the heart of a King
That's great with a nation's joy.
Shout for France and Savoy!

XI.

Take up the child, Mac Mahon, though
Thy hand be red
From Magenta's dead,
And riding on, in front of the troop,
In the dust of the whirlwind of war
Through the gate of the city of Milan, stoop
And take up the child to thy saddle-bow,
Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower
Of his smile as clear as a star!
Thou hast a right to the child, we say,

Since the women are weeping for joy as those
Who, by thy help and from this day,
Shall be happy mothers indeed.
They are raining flowers from terrace and roof:
Take up the flower in the child.
While the shout goes up of a nation freed
And heroically self-reconciled,
Till the snow on that peaked Alp aloof
Starts, as feeling God's finger anew,
And all those cold white marble fires
Of mounting saints on the Duomo-spires
Flicker against the Blue.
'Emperor
Evermore.'

XII.

Ay, it is He,
Who rides at the King's right hand!
Leave room to his horse and draw to the side,
Nor press too near in the ecstasy
Of a newly delivered impassioned land:
He is moved, you see,
He who has done it all.

They call it a cold stern face;
But this is Italy
Who rises up to her place!—
For this he fought in his youth,
Of this he dreamed in the past;
The lines of the resolute mouth
Tremble a little at last.
Cry, he has done it all!
'Emperor
Evermore.'

XIII.

It is not strange that he did it,
Though the deed may seem to strain
To the wonderful, unpermitted,
For such as lead and reign.
But he is strange, this man:
The people's instinct found him
(A wind in the dark that ran
Through a chink where was no door),
And elected him and crowned him
Empéror
Evermore.

XIV.

Autocrat? let them scoff,
  Who fail to comprehend
That a ruler incarnate of
  The people, must transcend
All common king-born kings.
These subterranean springs
A sudden outlet winning,
Have special virtues to spend.
The people's blood runs through him,
Dilates from head to foot,
Creates him absolute,
And from this great beginning
Evokes a greater end
To justify and renew him—
    Emperor
    Evermore.

XV.

What! did any maintain
That God or the people (think!)
Could make a marvel in vain?—
Out of the water-jar there,
Draw wine that none could drink?

Is this a man like the rest,
This miracle, made unaware,
By a rapture of popular air,
And caught to the place that was best?
You think he could barter and cheat
As vulgar diplomates use,
With the people's heart in his breast?
Prate a lie into shape
Lest truth should cumber the road;
Play at the fast and loose
Till the world is strangled with tape;
Maim the soul's complete
To fit the hole of a toad;
And filch the dogman's meat
To feed the offspring of God?

XVI.

Nay, but he, this wonder,
He cannot palter nor prate,
Though many around him and under,
With intellects trained to the curve,
Distrust him in spirit and nerve
Because his meaning is straight.

Measure him ere he depart
With those who have governed and led;
Larger so much by the heart,
Larger so much by the head.
Emperor
Evermore.

XVII.

He holds that, consenting or dissident,
Nations must move with the time;
Assumes that crime with a precedent
Doubles the guilt of the crime;
—Denies that a slaver's bond,
Or a treaty signed by knaves,
(*Quorum magna pars* and beyond
Was one of an honest name)
Gives an inexpugnable claim
To abolishing men into slaves.
Emperor
Evermore.

XVIII.

He will not swagger nor boast
Of his country's meeds, in a tone

Missuiting a great man most
If such should speak of his own;
Nor will he act, on her side,
From motives baser, indeed,
Than a man of a noble pride
Can avow for himself at need;
Never, for luere or laurels,
Or custom, though such should be rife,
Adapting the smaller morals
To measure the larger life.
He, though the merchants persuade,
And the soldiers are eager for strife,
Finds not his country in quarrels
Only to find her in trade,—
While still he accords her such honor
As never to flinch for her sake
Where men put service upon her,
Found heavy to undertake
And scarcely like to be paid:
Believing a nation may act
Unselfishly—shiver a lance
(As the least of her sons may, in fact)
And not for a cause of finance.
Emperor
Evermore.

XIX.

Great is he,
Who uses his greatness for all.
His name shall stand perpetually
As a name to applaud and cherish,
Not only within the civic wall
For the loyal, but also without
For the generous and free.
Just is he,
Who is just for the popular due
As well as the private debt.
The praise of nations ready to perish
Fall on him,—crown him in view
Of tyrants caught in the net,
And statesmen dizzy with fear and doubt!
And though, because they are many,
And he is merely one,
And nations selfish and cruel
Heap up the inquisitor's fuel
To kill the body of high intents,
And burn great deeds from their place,
Till this, the greatest of any,
May seem imperfectly done;
Courage, whoever circumvents!

Courage, courage, whoever is base!
The soul of a high intent, be it known,
Can die no more than any soul
Which God keeps by him under the throne;
And this, at whatever interim,
Shall live, and be consummated
Into the being of deeds made whole.
Courage, courage! happy is he,
Of whom (himself among the dead
And silent), this word shall be said;
—That he might have had the world with him,
But chose to side with suffering men,
And had the world against him when
He came to deliver Italy.

Emperor
Evermore.

THE DANCE.

I.

You remember down at Florence our Cascine,
Where the people on the feast-days walk and drive,
And, through the trees, long-drawn in many a green way,
O'er-roofing hum and murmur like a hive,
The river and the mountains look alive?

II.

You remember the piazzone there, the stand-place
Of carriages a-brim with Florence Beauties,
Who lean and melt to music as the band plays,
Or smile and chat with some one who a-foot is,
Or on horseback, in observance of male duties?

III.

'Tis so pretty, in the afternoons of summer,
So many gracious faces brought together!
Call it rout, or call it concert, they have come here,
In the floating of the fan and of the feather,
To reciprocate with beauty the fine weather.

IV.

While the flower-girls offer nosegays (because *they* too
Go with other sweets) at every carriage-door;
Here, by shake of a white finger, signed away to
Some next buyer, who sits buying score on score,
Piling roses upon roses evermore.

V.

'And last season, when the French camp had its station
In the meadow-ground, things quickened and grew gayer
Through the mingling of the liberating nation
With this people; groups of Frenchmen everywhere,
Strolling, gazing, judging lightly . . 'who was fair.'

VI.

Then the noblest lady present took upon her
To speak nobly from her carriage for the rest;
'Pray these officers from France to do us honour
By dancing with us straightway.'—The request
Was gravely apprehended as addressed.

VII.

And the men of France bareheaded, bowing lowly,
Led out each a proud signora to the space
Which the startled crowd had rounded for them—slowly,
Just a touch of still emotion in his face,
Not presuming, through the symbol, on the grace.

VIII.

There was silence in the people: some lips trembled,
But none jested. Broke the music, at a glance:
And the daughters of our princes, thus assembled,
Stepped the measure with the gallant sons of France.
Hush! it might have been a Mass, and not a dance.

IX.

And they danced there till the blue that overskied us
Swooned with passion, though the footing seemed sedate;
And the mountains, heaving mighty hearts beside us,
Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to dilate,
And touch the holy stone where Dante sate.

X.

Then the sons of France bareheaded, lowly bowing,
Led the ladies back where kinsmen of the south
Stood, received them;—till, with burst of overflowing
Feeling . . . husbands, brothers, Florence's male youth,
Turned, and kissed the martial strangers mouth to mouth.

XI

And a cry went up, a cry from all that people!
—You have heard a people cheering, you suppose,
For the Member, mayor . . with chorus from the steeple?

This was different: searce as loud perhaps, (who knows?)
For we saw wet eves around us ere the close.

XII.

And we felt as if a nation, too long borne in
By hard wrongers, comprehending in such attitude
That God had spoken somewhere since the morning,
That men were somehow brothers, by no platitude,
Cried exultant in great wonder and free gratitude.

A TALE OF VILLAFRANCA.

TOLD IN TUSCANY.

I.

My little son, my Florentine,
  Sit down beside my knee,
And I will tell you why the sign
  Of joy which flushed our Italy,
Has faded since but yesternight;
And why your Florence of delight
  Is mourning as you see.

II.

A great man (who was crowned one day)
  Imagined a great Deed:
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,
  He touched it finely till the seed
Possessed the flower: from heart and brain
He fed it with large thoughts humane,
  To help a people's need.

III.

He brought it out into the sun—
They blessed it to his face:
'O great pure Deed, that hast undone
So many bad and base!
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,
Deliver by God's grace.

IV.

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north and south,
Rose up in wrath and fear,
And cried, protesting by one mouth,
'What monster have we here?
A great Deed at this hour of day?
A great just Deed—and not for pay?
Absurd,—or insincere.

V.

'And if sincere, the heavier blow
In that case we shall bear,
For where's our blessed 'status quo,'
Our holy treaties, where,—

Our rights to sell a race, or buy,
Protect and pillage, occupy,
And civilize despair?'

VI.

Some muttered that the great Deed meant
A great pretext to sin;
And others, the pretext, so lent,
Was heinous (to begin).
Volcanic terms of 'great' and 'just?'
Admit such tongues of flame, the crust
Of time and law falls in.

VII.

A great Deed in this world of ours?
Unheard of the pretence is:
It threatens plainly the great Powers;
Is fatal in all senses.
A just deed in the world?—call out
The rifles! be not slack about
The national defences.

VIII.

And many murmured, 'From this source
What red blood must be poured!'
And some rejoined, ''Tis even worse;
What red tape is ignored!'
All cursed the Doer for an evil
Called here, enlarging on the Devil,—
There, monkeying the Lord!

IX.

Some said, it could not be explained,
Some, could not be excused;
And others, 'Leave it unrestrained,
Gehenna's self is loosed.'
And all cried, 'Crush it, maim it, gag it!
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,
Truncated and traduced!'

X.

But He stood sad before the sun,
(The peoples felt their fate).
'The world is many,—I am one;
My great Deed was too great.

God's fruit of justice ripens slow:
Men's souls are narrow; let them grow.
My brothers, we must wait.'

XI.

The tale is ended, child of mine,
Turned graver at my knee.
They say your eyes, my Florentine,
Are English: it may be:
And yet I've marked as blue a pair
Following the doves across the square
At Venice by the sea.

XII.

Ah, child! ah, child! I cannot say
A word more. You conceive
The reason now, why just to-day
We see our Florence grieve.
Ah child, look up into the sky!
In this low world, where great Deeds die,
What matter if we live?

A COURT LADY.

I.

Her hair was tawny with gold, her eyes with purple were dark,
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red and restless spark.

II.

Never was lady of Milan nobler in name and in race;
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in the face.

III.

Never was lady on earth more true as woman and wife,
Larger in judgment and instinct, prouder in manners and life.

IV.

She stood in the early morning, and said to her maidens,
'Bring
That silken robe made ready to wear at the court of the king.

V.

'Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid, clear of the mote,
Clasp me the large at the waist, and clasp me the small at the throat.

VI.

'Diamonds to fasten the hair, and diamonds to fasten the sleeves,
Laces to drop from their rays, like a powder of snow from the eaves.'

VII.

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight which gathered her up in a flame,
While, straight in her open carriage, she to the hospital came.

VIII.

In she went at the door, and gazing from end to end,
'Many and low are the pallets, but each is the place of a friend.'

IX.

Up she passed through the wards, and stood at a young man's bed:
Bloody the band on his brow, and livid the droop of his head.

X.

'Art thou a Lombard, my brother? Happy art thou,' she cried,
And smiled like Italy on him: he dreamed in her face and died.

XI.

Pale with his passing soul, she went on still to a second:
He was a grave hard man, whose years by dungeons were reckoned.

XII.

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds in his life were
sorer.
'Art thou a Romagnole?' Her eyes drove lightnings
before her.

XIII.

Austrian and priest had joined to double and tighten the
cord
Able to bind thee, O strong one,—free by the stroke
of a sword.

XIV.

'Now be grave for the rest of us, using the life over-
cast
To ripen our wine of the present, (too new,) in glooms
of the past.'

XV.

'Down she stepped to a pallet where lay a face like
a girl's
Young, and pathetic with dying,—a deep black hole in
the curls.

XVI.

'Art thou from Tuscany, brother? and seest thou, dreaming in pain,
Thy mother stand in the piazza, searching the ist of the slain?'

XVII.

Kind as a mother herself, she touched his cheeks with her hands:
'Blessed is she who has borne thee, although she should weep as she stands.'

XVIII.

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm carried off by a ball:
Kneeling, . . 'O more than my brother! how shall I thank thee for all?'

XIX.

'Each of the heroes around us has fought for his land and line,
But *thou* hast fought for a stranger, in hate of a wrong not thine.

XX.

'Happy are all free peoples, too strong to be dispossessed.
But blessed are those among nations, who dare to be strong for the rest!'

XXI.

Ever she passed on her way, and came to a couch where pined
One with a face from Venetia, white with a hope out of mind.

XXII.

Long she stood and gazed, and twice she tried at the name,
But two great crystal tears were all that faltered and came.

XXIII.

Only a tear for Venice?—she turned as in passion and loss,
And stooped to his forehead and kissed it, as if she were kissing the cross.

XXIV.

Faint with that strain of heart she moved on then to another,
Stern and strong in his death. 'And dost thou suffer, my brother?'

XXV.

Holding his hands in hers:—'Out of the Piedmont lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom! sweetest to live or to die on.'

XXVI.

Holding his cold rough hands—'Well, oh well have ye done
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would not be noble alone.'

XXVII.

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose to her feet with a spring—
'That was a Piedmontese! and this is the Court of the King.'

AN AUGUST VOICE.

"Una voce augusta."—
MONITORE TOSCANO.

I.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
I made the treaty upon it.
Just venture a quiet rebuke;
Dall' Ongaro write him a sonnet;
Ricasoli gently explain
Some need of the constitution:
He'll swear to it over again,
Providing an 'easy solution.'
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

II.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
I promised the Emperor Francis
To argue the case by his book,
And ask you to meet his advances.

The Dueal cause, we know,
(Whether you or he be the wronger)
Has very strong points;—although
Your bayonets, there, have stronger.
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

III.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
He is not pure altogether.
For instance, the oath which he took
(In the Forty-eight rough weather)
He'd 'nail your flag to his mast,'
Then softly scuttled the boat you
Hoped to escape in at last,
And both by a 'Proprio motu.'
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

IV.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
The scheme meets nothing to shock it
In this smart letter, look,
We found in Radetsky's pocket;

Where his Highness in sprightly style
Of the flower of his Tuscans wrote,
'These heads be the hottest in file;
Pray shoot them the quickest.' Quote,
And call back the Grand Duke.

V.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
There *are* some things to object to.
He cheated, betrayed, and forsook,
Then called in the foe to protect you.
He taxed you for wines and for meats
Throughout that eight years' pastime
Of Austria's drum in your streets—
Of course you remember the last time
You called back your Grand Duke.

VI.

You'll take back the Grand Duke?
It is not race he is poor in,
Although he never could brook
The patriot cousin at Turin.

His love of kin you discern,
  By his hate of your flag and me—
So decidedly apt to turn
  All colours at sight of the Three.*
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VII.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
  'Twas weak that he fled from the Pitti;
But consider how little he shook
  At thought of bombarding your city!
And, balancing that with this,
  The Christian rule is plain for us;
. . Or the Holy Father's Swiss
  Have shot his Perugians in vain for us.
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VIII.

Pray take back your Grand Duke.
  —I, too, have suffered persuasion.
All Europe, raven and rook,
  Screeched at me armed for your nation.

* The Italian tricolor: red, green, and white.

Your cause in my heart struck spurs;
I swept such warnings aside for you:
My very child's eyes, and Hers,
Grew like my brother's who died for you.
You'll call back the Grand Duke?

IX.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
My French fought nobly with reason,—
Left many a Lombardy nook
Red as with wine out of season.
Little we grudged what was done there,
Paid freely your ransom of blood:
Our heroes stark in the sun there,
We would not recall if we could.
You'll call back the Grand Duke?

X.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
His son rode fast as he got off
That day on the enemy's hook,
When *I* had an epaulette shot off.

Though splashed (as I saw him afar, no,
Near) by those ghastly rains,
The mark, when you've washed him in Arno,
Will scarcely be larger than Cain's.
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

XI.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
'Twill be so simple, quite beautiful:
The shepherd recovers his crook,
. . If you should be sheep, and dutiful.
I spoke a word worth chalking
On Milan's wall—but stay,
Here's Poniatowsky talking,—
You'll listen to *him* to-day,
And call back the Grand Duke.

XII.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
Observe, there's no one to force it,—
Unless the Madonna, St. Luke
Drew for you, choose to endorse it.

I charge you by great St. Martino
And prodigies quickened by wrong,
Remember your Dead on Ticino;
Be worthy, be constant, be strong.
—Bah!—call back the Grand Duke!!

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

ὡς βασιλει, ὡς θεῳ, ὡς νεκρῳ.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

I.

THE Pope on Christmas Day
  Sits in St. Peter's Chair;
But the peoples murmur and say,
  'Our souls are sick and forlorn,
And who will show us where
  Is the stable where Christ was born?'

II.

The star is lost in the dark;
  The manger is lost in the straw;
The Christ cries faintly . . hark! . .
  Through bands that swaddle and strangle—
But the Pope in the chair of awe
  Looks down the great quadrangle.

III.

The magi kneel at his foot,
Kings of the east and west,
But, instead of the angels, (mute
Is the 'Peace on earth' of their song,)
The peoples, perplexed and opprest,
Are sighing, 'How long, how long?'

IV.

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in
Shadow of aisle and dome,
The bear who tore up the children,
The fox who burnt up the corn,
And the wolf who suckled at Rome
Brothers to slay and to scorn.

V.

Cardinals left and right of him,
Worshippers round and beneath,
The silver trumpets at sight of him
Thrill with a musical blast:
But the people say through their teeth,
'Trumpets? we wait for the Last!'

VI.

He sits in the place of the Lord,
And asks for the gifts of the time;
Gold, for the haft of a sword,
To win back Romagna averse,
Incense, to sweeten a crime,
And myrrh, to embitter a curse.

VII.

Then a king of the west said, 'Good!—
'I bring thee the gifts of the time;
Red, for the patriot's blood,
Green, for the martyr's crown,
White, for the dew and the rime,
When the morning of God comes down.'

VIII.

—O mystic tricolor bright!
The Pope's heart quailed like a man's:
The cardinals froze at the sight,
Bowing their tonsures hoary:
And the eyes in the peacock-fans
Winked at the alien glory.

IX.

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,
'Now blessed be he who has brought
These gifts of the time to the Pope,
When our souls were sick and forlorn.
—And *here* is the star we sought,
To show us where Christ was born!

ITALY AND THE WORLD.

I.

Florence, Bologna, Parma, Modena.
When you named them a year ago,
So many graves reserved by God, in a
Day of judgement, you seemed to know,
To open and let out the resurrection.

II.

And meantime, (you made your reflection
If you were English) was nought to be done
But sorting sables, in predilection
For all those martyrs dead and gone,
Till the new earth and heaven made ready.

III.

And if your politics were not heady,
Violent, . . 'Good,' you added, 'good

In all things! mourn on sure and steady.
Churchyard thistles are wholesome food
For our European wandering asses.

IV.

'The date of the resurrection passes
Human fore-knowledge: men unborn
Will gain by it (even in the lower classes),
But none of these. It is not the morn
Because the cock of France is crowing.

V.

'Cocks crow at midnight, seldom knowing
Starlight from dawn-light: 'tis a mad
Poor creature.' Here you paused, and growing
Scornful, . . suddenly, let us add,
The trumpet sounded, the graves were open.

VI.

Life and life and life! agrope in
The dusk of death, warm hands, stretched out
For swords, proved more life still to hope in,
Beyond and behind. Arise with a shout,
Nation of Italy, slain and buried!

VII.

Hill to hill and turret to turret
  Flashing the tricolor,—newly created
Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,
  Rise heroic and renovated,
Rise to the final restitution.

VIII.

Rise; prefigure the grand solution
  Of earth's municipal, insular schisms,—
Statesmen draping self-love's conclusion
  In cheap, vernacular patriotisms,
Unable to give up Judæa for Jesus.

XI.

Bring us the higher example; release us
  Into the larger coming time:
And into Christ's broad garment piece us
  Rags of virtue as poor as crime,
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

X.

No more Jew nor Greek then,—taunting
  Nor taunted;—no more England nor France!

But one confederate brotherhood planting
One flag only, to mark the advance,
Onward and upward, of all humanity.

XI.

For fully developed Christianity
Is civilisation perfected.
'Measure the frontier,' shall it be said,
'Count the ships,' in national vanity?
—Count the nation's heart-beats sooner.

XII.

For, though behind by a cannon or schooner,
That nation still is predominant,
Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to oppugn or
Succour another, in wrong or want,
Passing the frontier in love and abhorrence.

XIII.

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,
Open us out the wider way!
Dwarf in that chapel of old St. Lawrence
Your Michel Angelo's giant Day,
With the grandeur of this Day breaking o'er us!

XIV.

Ye who, restrained as an ancient chorus,
Mute while the coryphæus spake,
Hush your separate voices before us,
Sink your separate lives for the sake
Of one sole Italy's living for ever!

XV.

Givers of coat and cloak too,—never
Grudging that purple of yours at the best,—
By your heroic will and endeavour
Each sublimely dispossessed,
That all may inherit what each surrenders!

XVI.

Earth shall bless you, O noble emenders
On egotist nations! Ye shall lead
The plough of the world, and sow new splendours
Into the furrow of things, for seed,—
Ever the richer for what ye have given.

XVII.

Lead us and teach us, till earth and heaven
Grow larger around us and higher above.

Our sacrament-bread has a bitter leaven;
We bait our traps with the name of love,
Till hate itself has a kinder meaning.

XVIII.

Oh, this world: this cheating and screening
Of cheats! this conscience for candle-wicks,
Not beacon-fires! this over-weening
Of under-hand diplomatical tricks,
Dared for the country while scorned for the counter!

XIX.

Oh, this envy of those who mount here,
And oh, this malice to make them trip!
Rather quenching the fire there, drying the fount here,
To frozen body and thirsty lip,
Than leave to a neighbour their ministration.

XX.

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,
Viewing my England o'er Alp and sea.
I loved her more in her ancient fashion:
She carries her rifles too thick for me,
Who spares them so in the cause of a brother.

XXI.

Suspicion, panic? end this pother.
The sword, kept sheathless at peace-time, rusts.
None fears for himself while he feels for another:
The brave man either fights or trusts,
And wears no mail in his private chamber.

XXII.

Beautiful Italy! golden amber
Warm with the kisses of lover and traitor!
Thou who hast drawn us on to remember,
Draw us to hope now: let us be greater
By this new future than that old story.

XXIII.

Till truer glory replaces all glory,
As the torch grows blind at the dawn of day;
And the nations, rising up, their sorry
And foolish sins shall put away,
As children their toys when the teacher enters.

XXIV.

Till Love's one centre devour these centres
Of many self-loves; and the patriot's trick

To better his land by egotist ventures,
Defamed from a virtue, shall make men sick,
As the scalp at the belt of some red hero.

XXV.

For certain virtues have dropped to zero,
Left by the sun on the mountain's dewy side;
Churchman's charities, tender as Nero,
Indian suttee, heathen suicide,
Service to rights divine, proved hollow:

XXVI.

And Heptarchy patriotisms must follow.
—National voices, distinct yet dependent,
Ensphering each other, as swallow does swallow,
With circles still widening and ever ascendant,
In multiform life to united progression,—

XXVII.

These shall remain. And when, in the session
Of nations, the separate language is heard,
Each shall aspire, in sublime indiscretion,
To help with a thought or exalt with a word
Less her own than her rival's honour.

XXVIII.

Each Christian nation shall take upon her
The law of the Christian man in vast:
The crown of the getter shall fall to the donor,
And last shall be first while first shall be last,
And to love best shall still be, to reign unsurpassed.

A CURSE FOR A NATION.

PROLOGUE.

I HEARD an angel speak last night,
And he said, 'Write!
Write a Nation's curse for me,
And send it over the Western Sea.'

I faltered, taking up the word:
'Not so, my lord!
If curses must be, choose another
To send thy curse against my brother.

'For I am bound by gratitude,
By love and blood,
To brothers of mine across the sea,
Who stretch out kindly hands to me.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write
My curse to-night.
From the summits of love a curse is driven,
As lightning is from the tops of heaven.'

'Not so,' I answered. 'Evermore
My heart is sore
For my own land's sins: for little feet
Of children bleeding along the street:

'For parked-up honors that gainsay
The right of way:
For almsgiving through a door that is
Not open enough for two friends to kiss:

'For love of freedom which abates
Beyond the Straits:
For patriot virtue starved to vice on
Self-praise, self-interest, and suspicion:

'For an oligarchic parliament,
And bribes well-meant.
What curse to another land assign,
When heavy-souled for the sins of mine?

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write
My curse to-night.
Because thou hast strength to see and hate
A foul thing done *within* thy gate.'

'Not so,' I answered once again.
'To curse, choose men.
For I, a woman, have only known
How the heart melts and the tears run down.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write
My curse to-night.
Some women weep and curse, I say,
(And no one marvels,) night and day.

'And thou shalt take their part to-night,
Weep and write.
A curse from the depths of womanhood
Is very salt, and bitter, and good.'

So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,
What all may read.
And thus, as was enjoined on me,
I send it over the Western Sea.

THE CURSE.

I.

Because ye have broken your own chain
With the strain
Of brave men climbing a Nation's height,
Yet thence bear down with brand and thong
On souls of others,—for this wrong
This is the curse. Write.

Because yourselves are standing straight
In the state
Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,
Yet keep calm footing all the time
On writhing bond-slaves,—for this crime
This is the curse. Write.

Because ye prosper in God's name,
With a claim
To honour in the old world's sight,
Yet do the fiend's work perfectly
In strangling martyrs,—for this lie
This is the curse. Write.

II.

Ye shall watch while kings conspire
Round the people's smouldering fire,
And, warm for your part,
Shall never dare—O shame!
To utter the thought into flame
Which burns at your heart.
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while nations strive
With the bloodhounds, die or survive,
Drop faint from their jaws,
Or throttle them backward to death,
And only under your breath
Shall favor the cause.
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while strong men draw
The nets of feudal law
To strangle the weak,
And, counting the sin for a sin,
Your soul shall be sadder within
Than the word ye shall speak.
This is the curse. Write.

When good men are praying erect
That Christ may avenge his elect
And deliver the earth,
The prayer in your ears, said low,
Shall sound like the tramp of a foe
That's driving you forth.
This is the curse. Write.

When wise men give you their praise,
They shall pause in the heat of the phrase,
As if carried too far.
When ye boast your own charters kept true,
Ye shall blush;—for the thing which ye do
Derides what ye are.
This is the curse. Write.

When fools cast taunts at your gate,
Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate
As ye look o'er the wall,
For your conscience, tradition, and name
Explode with a deadlier blame
Than the worst of them all.
This is the curse. Write.

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be done,
Go, plant your flag in the sun
  Beside the ill-doers!
And recoil from clenching the curse
Of God's witnessing Universe
  With a curse of yours.
    This is the curse. Write.

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